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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 002997

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB/TPP/ABT BARBARA YODER AND WHA/CEN
USDA/FAS/DLP FOR HOWARD WETZEL
GUATEMALA FOR AGATT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: Honduras Announces Suspension of U.S. Beef Imports

REF: A) STATE 348293, B) SAN SALVADOR 03518

1. Summary: The Government of Honduras has announced a suspension of imports of U.S. beef and its derivatives, in accordance with guidelines issued by the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health). The Honduran ban does not include dairy products or other products considered to carry no risk of BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy). End Summary.

2. As early as December 25th, the Honduran press quoted Dr. Lizardo Reyes, Director of the GOH's Office of Animal Health, as declaring a ban on imports of U.S. beef. However, no official pronouncement was made until December 29th, when Dr. Reyes, along with the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Mariano Jimenez, held a press conference and released the statement translated below.

3. EconOff spoke with Dr. Reyes after the press conference, and delivered the talking points in ref A. Dr. Reyes stressed that Honduras is simply conforming to OIE guidelines, and is not following any resolution of OIRSA (Regional International Organization for Agricultural Health) such as that mentioned in ref B. (Note: In fact, when listing the products not covered by the ban, the third paragraph of the press release follows nearly word-for-word the OIE guidelines for restrictions of imports from countries with a high risk of BSE, as available on-line at http://www.oie.int/esp/normes/mcode/E_00068.htm. End note.)

4. Dr. Reyes also made positive statements to the effect that he was sure that the infected cow was an isolated case, that he is confident the USDA is taking all necessary precautions in response to the case, and that Honduras will be able to lift the suspension on imports "in the short term."

Informal Translation of GOH Press Release

5. Begin Translation:

Title: The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock announces the temporary suspension of the importation of animals and bovine-derived products from the United States

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock announced a suspension of the importation of animals, meat and bovine-derived products from the United States, after the Department of Agriculture of that country announced on December 23, 2003 a suspected case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, better known as "Mad Cow Disease," in a cow slaughtered December 9, 2003 in the area of Washington. This suspected case was confirmed by information received December 28, 2003 from Dr. Peter Fernandez, Associate Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, when the laboratory based in Weybridge (United Kingdom) confirmed the diagnosis of the National Veterinary Laboratories in Ames, Iowa.

Honduras, following the guidelines established by the OIE for this disease, has taken this decision with the goal of avoiding any potential risk to public health, or to national livestock.

Exempt from the ban are certain products such as milk and milk products, semen, embryos, protein-free tallow, dicalcium phosphate, hides, skins, and gelatin and collagen obtained from hides and skins, since there exists no zoosanitary risk from this merchandise.

These actions also have the goal of assuring third countries to whom Honduras exports that we have taken the necessary precautions to guarantee that our merchandise will not pose any risk to these other nations.

It is also necessary to mention that the consumption of beef in Honduras is guaranteed by these actions, as well as by the fact that the great majority of our livestock are fed by pasture and forage.

End Translation.

Pierce